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## **From church religiousness to spirituality The transformation of religion in the early 21st century**

### **1. Religion and religiousness in the modern world**

Contemporary reality is pluralistic in all dimensions. One can actually venture to say that pluralism (and also how others write – plurality) is today one of the guiding principles by which modern societies are organized (see e.g. Mariański 1997: 80).

The world we live in is constantly fluctuating – it is very dynamic. Society, however, is less and less rigid, becoming a rather transient formation under the state of constant creation. As never before, the interaction vision is becoming current. According to it the society does not merely exist, but it is still developing. It lacks harmony and balance – constant changes are not directed towards a specific goal, but it is a constant quest for innovation. Borders, once rigidly determined by universal rules, are now blurred. The faith in beneficial effects of progress is not a base for the changes, it is the current state of permanent questioning. Governance, order and predictability are replaced by uncertainty and disorganization that are the effects of instability and volatility (Mariański 1997: 35).

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, therefore, to find a basis which designates new order in both the current and potential dimensions. The world is becoming irrevocably pluralistic (Bauman 1992: 18).

Social development leads to increased autonomy of the individual areas of social life. Each of them becomes a kind of individuality, specificity and independence of the others in their respective functions. Pluralism is a multiplicity of distinct patterns and reaction models that can be implemented in different areas of life. This situation is also reflected in the sphere of religious life. In contemporary societies there is a lack of unambiguous compliance to religious and social norms as the religious monopoly of a particular religious confession was broken. Religious values are losing their meaning and purpose and are now re-

stricted only to the ever decreasing sphere of sacrum. Religion in a pluralistic society is changing in its function from the “sacred canopy” that extends over the whole experience of individuals and groups to an “umbrella” protecting only against local storms in a particular area, the area of religion itself (Borowik and Doktor 2001: 61). Once, religion gave stable backing, it was the anchor which sustained an individual in solid values, now it no longer plays a greater role in resolving everyday dilemmas.

Reality is subordinate to the processes of differentiation, pluralization and individualization, where man is beginning to construct his own biography – including its religious aspect. An increasingly common phenomenon is the moving away from religion of fate – the religion in which man is brought up – to the religion of choice – which is becoming a subject to autonomous decision (Marianiński 1998: 67).

It is important to pay a little more attention to changes taking place within the sphere of religion. One of the key approaches describing the transformations associated with the sphere of religious experiences are the theories of secularization. These concepts are not uniform but are subject to evolution (on the basis of social theories of religion, there are at least a dozen major approaches describing the specificity of secularism).

Reflecting on the role and importance of the Internet in the processes of secularization, it is essential to substantiate the very concept of secularism. It is extremely ambiguous and sometimes variously interpreted on the basis of discussion within contexts of different fields of knowledge. The dictionary meaning of the term refers to the phenomenon of laicism, desacralization and generally a move away from religion. One can replace it with the concept of secularism. Peter Berger relates this process with the emigration from the areas where the church was in control and had an influence – it is expressed in the separation of church and state. In his concept, secularization is also present in the symbolic sphere and covers all cultural and creative life, through the disappearance of religious elements in art, philosophy and literature (Berger 2005: 150). Janusz Marianiński proposes that this concept be related to the socio-cultural process that takes place in modern times. As a result the various areas of social life gradually free themselves from the control of religious organizations and are becoming independent from religious institutions and the church (Marianiński 2004: 364–365).

Peter Berger, speaking of modernist theories of secularization, emphasizes that the main idea of this concepts formulated in the 1950s and the 60s was the Enlightenment idea of assuming that modernization inevitably leads to the questioning of the role of religion in society, as well as its importance in shaping the individual consciousness of its members (Berger 1999: 2–3).

Currently, secularism is no longer understood as simply the disappearance of religion, and more often the specific changes that occur in the sacrum. Charac-

teristic of this transformation of the concept, are the words of Berger in which the assumption that we live in a secularized world is simply wrong. In his opinion, there is no doubt that the world today is as religious as it used to be, and in some areas, religiousness is even greater than ever (Berger 1999: 2). The concept of secularization is not, however, disappearing from the sociological theory – it is rather starting to be understood differently than in the past.

It is worth recalling a few functioning processes to this concept. Very noteworthy is the multi-faceted concept of Jose Casanova, who points out that secularization leads to the loss of influence of religion on various aspects of social life, but it is not a one-track process. According to Casanova, its scale can be captured in three spheres. Firstly, it can be seen in the decrease in the number of members formally belonging to the churches and their lower involvement in a religious cult. Secondly, it can be observed that there is a significantly lower importance of religious organizations in the public sphere – they have increasingly less influence on the course of the social mainstream. Thirdly (and as it seems the most importantly) it is clearly evident in modern societies that there is decline in the importance of religious values, norms and patterns of behaviour or thought (e.g. Casanova 2003: 409).

The changes do not mean the end of religion. Tomasz Szlendak writes about the rise and bloom of the religious market. He believes that people should stop talking about interdefined processes of secularization, and the emphasis should be moved to the phenomenon of individualization and pluralization of religion. According to his thesis, postmodernism does not only extinguish, but even to some extent produces new religious needs. Religiousness of modern society is syncretic, it is subordinated to rules drawn from the principles of different religious and ideological traditions. In addition, there is the phenomenon of commodification of religion itself, which is a transference of the rules and patterns in the behaviour towards believers originating in the consumer market. Individuals in modern societies are becoming picky eaters, to which churches must respond in order to retain them as followers-clients. Strategies to attract the faithful, religious leadership models and even doctrine had to be adapted in order to attract consumers (see Szlendak 2008: 103).

Nowadays, one can more and more observe the revival of popular religious forms which combine elements of Christianity with magic and occult practices. Their distribution is associated with a deep human need for spiritual experience, which is not sufficiently satisfied by the churches (Fedczak 2006: 60).

This specific transformation does not bypass the well-established community with strong religious traditions in which religion has been an important component of legitimizing the social order. Even in these increasingly common phenomena there is a shift away from the religion of fate – the religion in which man is brought up – to the religion of choice – which is becoming an autonomous decision.

It is also worth mentioning the phenomenon of privatization of religion, which constitutes one of the key transformation planes. Religion today is not only the domain of churches or communities, but also of individuals. Reality is subordinate to the processes of differentiation, pluralization and individualization, where man is beginning to construct his own biography – including its religious aspect (Mariański 1998: 67). The polarization of public and private spheres leads to the loss of importance of religion in the society. The decisions made in relation to the religious field today are mostly a matter of choice dependent on individual preferences, simultaneously losing power. The relativization of religiousness is becoming characteristic. The process of individualization linked with this, usually means a move away from institutionalized orthodoxy towards selectivity of religious beliefs, or their privatization (Mariański 2006: 12). In the event where the process of the slow disappearance of a single and coherent system of values and religious and moral norms in a society facing a high degree of economic development, it is worth considering whether the trends cited, characteristic of highly developed societies of the West, can be seen in the social Polish sphere during the early 21st century.

## **2. Religiousness, church religiousness, spirituality – an attempt at conceptualization**

For further considerations, it is crucial to conceptualize concepts of religiousness. Many studies, analyses and surveys of trying to capture the specificity and the changes taking place within religion, in their deeper reading suggests that this term is understood differently, which often leads to conceptual confusion. In trying to order the findings, one can say that religiousness is a measure of the presence of religion in the life of the individual and society, the concept therefore indicates the presence of religion in the behaviour of an individual or its role in a society (Mariański 2006: 35). It should not be forgotten that the clear and universal definition of religiousness is very difficult.

Belief systems, convictions and ideas commonly defined as religion often differ from one another quite drastically. Thus, religiousness is a heterogeneous phenomenon – it should be considered taking into account the specific cultural context underlying the functioning of a society, and in particular related to the specific religious system in the community.

Considering the need for a uniform conceptual understanding, religion can be seen as a human way of experiencing existence, closely related to the sphere of the sacrum, which has an impact on attitudes towards all elements of religion, which in turn directly determines the religious and non-religious behaviours of

the individual. Religiousness is expressed in the intellectual, emotive (internal) and behavioural (external) spheres. It is an attitude, composed of subjective, objective and content-related components.

Irena Borowik, for example, views religiousness in this way. In her opinion religiousness should be understood by a variety of content and forms of manifestations of primary, subjective belief that the meaning of human life cannot be reduced only to biological aspects. Content is here understood as both culturally inherited and acquired through individual exploration, giving the verbalized beliefs about the nature of man and the world, purpose and destiny, moral principles, commonly referred to as the doctrine, philosophy or ideology. The forms, however, are the actions resulting from the assumed belief, expressed in the possession and manifestation of attachment to the symbols, in the exercise of worship and an affiliation of the community (Borowik 2002: 381).

Edward Ciupak recognized religiousness similarly. He notes that in sociology the phenomenon is considered in two aspects: as defined views and beliefs relating to religion as such, and as a relatively permanent constituted attitude towards the content, inspiring particular behaviour (Ciupak 1984: 36).

Recognition should be given to Władysław Piwowarski for one of the best structured concept of religiousness, which until recently was commonly accepted as a basis for religious studies in the Polish society.

The key issue is the adoption of a suitable reference system. It should be recognized that the most appropriate for the Polish reality seems to be a system comprising the conventional and environmental religiousness. Institutionally, socially and culturally characterized religiousness, plays a primary role here. Church religiousness is being redefined and is entering the cultural environment (Piwowarski 1975: 157–165). Piwowarski notes that in making this clarification, one should, however, keep in mind the methodological requirements that must be strictly maintained.

Firstly, using the methods of today, one can only test properly the institutionalized religiousness. Experiences of sociological research on the Polish society point to the fact that institutionalized religiousness, or at least indirectly linked to the ecclesiastical institutions (churches), exists currently on a mass scale. Secondly, religiousness in the social reality is limited by the socio-cultural context. That is the context of Judeo-Christian or simply Christian traditions, and within it – the Catholic tradition. In other cultures, where extremely different values, beliefs and religious symbols can exist, the content definition of religiousness formulated in the Polish socio-cultural context, may not be relevant. This should be done with one caveat: religion is certainly widespread, and these considerations are meant to indicate that it carries socio-cultural stigma that should be taken into account before the operationalization of the concept of religiousness.

Thirdly, religiousness as a social and cultural category must be understood only by reference to the world hidden from human cognition. This is a reference



to the religious phenomena as the ultimate basis of being beyond empirical explanation and to the highest value – the *sacrum*. The content of this concept is sometimes defined differently by sociologists, however, it depends primarily on the specific context in religious tradition, in which religiousness is considered (Piwowarski 1996: 45–48).

By following these three major directives, it should be assumed that religiousness is the subject of sociological research which is institutionally, socially and culturally characterized, and finds its reference in relation to the sphere of *sacrum*.

Piwowarski's approach, although methodologically useful and ordering the reflection of religiousness, seems to be insufficient in current reality. Transformations of religious fields are in fact significant enough that contemporary religiousness is becoming more closely de-institutionalized. Even in the realities of the society on the basis of tradition, such as the Polish society, religiousness is still subject to transformation.

The solution to questions and conceptual issues can be a distinction of variations or types of religion possible to identify in social realities of Poland in the early 21st century. One such concept may be an attempt to separate religiousness, church religiousness, and spirituality, and treating them as a separate categories of analysis.

Church religiousness seems to be a category which is located very closely to the basis of religiousness as defined in the concept of Piwowarski. He diminishes the significance of the concept of religiousness to religious forms under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, making it difficult to grasp the possibility of other (non-institutional) forms of religion.

Church religiousness can therefore be seen as a specific form of religiousness identified with institutional religiousness. Its direct manifestation are the attitudes and behaviours of members of a religious community that are based on a model of religious life determined by the values, norms and patterns of behaviour propagated by the Church understood as an institution.

Spirituality should be located on the opposite pole. It is important to claim that the concept in sociology of religion has a specific meaning. In sociological discourse, spirituality can be understood as a specific, in-depth form of religiousness.

In connection with the process of privatization of religion, the increasing scale of religious syncretism and dissemination of cult groups and activities, it is necessary to have a redefinition of the concept of religiousness understood primarily through the prism of institutionally defined framework of religious experience. A number of beliefs and practices are increasingly present in contemporary reality and defies traditional classifications and are therefore becoming questionable to include in categories of religiousness in the traditional form. Thomas Luckmann pays much attention to the phenomenon of invisible religion

understood as personalized, non-denominational religiousness. The multiplicity and diversity of forms of religious commitment present in contemporary socio-cultural realities make a distinguished contemporary way of talking about spirituality rather than religiousness, pointing to changing specificity of attitudes and behaviours of individuals toward the phenomena located in the sphere of religion.

Therefore, spirituality in this context should be understood as beliefs and practices which are not associated with traditional religious institutions, but they are focused on non-human powers. The characteristic features of spirituality are the resignation of anthropomorphically conceived God, whose place is taken by various higher powers; blurring the dualistic distinction between spiritual and materialistic realities; the presence of magic and the occult, faith in a variety of capacities and forms of energy; increased interest in altered states of consciousness; negation of the idea of progress traditionally understood as a technological dominance of man over nature, a return to traditional forms of health care, food production, environmental protection, prevention of disasters (Pawluczuk 2004: 90).

In this context, the relation to the theory of religious consumerism can be re-establish. Szlendak referring to Wade Clark Roof's thought, emphasizes that the dominant theme in religion, which approaches the faithful consumer, is authentic inner life and search. Believers today are interested in how religion relates to their lives, what faith can mean to them. We are therefore faced with a far-reaching individualization and focus on their own needs – religion is primarily to help people, so they can find solace (Szlendak 2008: 104).

### **3. From church religiousness to spirituality?**

The above attempt to conceptualize the key concepts of this article will also designate the direction of reflection and identify the main problem orienting considerations contained herein. Today, it seems important to answer the question of the specificity and scale of transformations, which are ongoing processes in Poland in relation to the field of religion. This area is subject to very intense changes, which are part of the overall transformation possible to observed in our reality. Processes associated with laicism, atheisation and the wider secularization do not bypass Poland.

As a starting point for the analysis, we accept the view of the increasing privatization of religion. According to the thesis of Thomas Luckmann, an intensive process of privatization of religion is occurring. It cannot, however, be referred to as the dusk of holiness, or the end of religion. It is merely the form of religion



that is changing, and in a sense the content – in a sense, it loses its transcendental element. Institutionalized religiousness is replaced with a personalized religion. This privatized form of religion is, according to Luckmann, the dominant social form of religion in contemporary society (Zulehner 2003: 381).

In an attempt to define the basis of the discussed issues, it is imperative to develop appropriate tools and methods of analysis allowing to capture the specificity of changes in the sphere of religious attitudes. This task seems to be very difficult. Religiousness closed within the private sphere is in fact virtually impossible to capture with the proven and well-established methods and techniques of social research. Traditional test procedures cease to be adequate, in fact, in the absence of recognition of religious practice and religious institutions it is not always the same as the departure from religion.

According to the *Polish Small Statistical Yearbook* 2011 there are 33.7 million Catholics in Poland, which represents approximately 88.5% of the total. But we must remember that it is very difficult to have a clear criteria to define precisely the people who may be without a doubt considered to be Catholics, so some sources estimate the number of Catholics in Poland for more than 90.0%: e.g. Wrocław research laboratories IMAS International shows 93.0% of Catholics among all members of society (IMAS 2009). A survey in February 2009 carried out by CBOS shows that nearly 95.0% of adult Poles are invariably considered to be Catholics (Boguszewski 2009a).

We are therefore faced with the situation of religious homogeneity. This reflection relates to the transformation taking place among the faithful of the Roman Catholic Church.

Trying to draw a specificity of religiousness which characterize contemporary Poles and to capture the dynamics of its changes, it is treated as a starting point for surveys of public opinion research centers. Data obtained by IMAS International shows that 69.0% of Poles declare themselves as believers, and 13.0% even as deep believers. Indifferent and undecided in matters of faith are respectively 8.0% and 9.0% of all respondents (IMAS 2009).

Similar data was obtained during surveys conducted by CBOS. According to the declarations, 95.0% of respondents considered themselves believers, of which every eighth person (13.0%) describes their faith as deep. Only one in twenty respondents (5.0%) claims to be a non-believer, including the only two in one hundred (2.0%) who declare a total lack of faith (Boguszewski 2009a).

CBOS has since the early 1990s in their monthly research included basic indicators of religiousness of Poles – faith and participation in religious practices. This creates a certain ability to monitor developments in this area. It should be noted, however, that we are talking here only about selected indicators of religiousness, certainly not giving the full picture.

The analysis of the survey results shows that faith in God was and still is universally declared. It can be concluded that the high level of the declared faith

is a permanent feature among Poles. The analysis of research conducted systematically by CBOS shows that this parameter has been maintained at almost the same level for the past twenty years. Since the early 1990s, almost all respondents consistently (from 93.0% to 97.0%) describe themselves as believers, of which roughly one in ten assesses their faith as deep. The percentage of people declaring to be rather or completely non-believer also remains more or less constant – a relatively low level (from 3.0% to 7.0%) (Boguszewska 2009b).

Another key parameter which allows a closer outline of the specificity of religiousness characterizing Polish Catholics is their participation in religious practices with particular emphasis on the participation in the communal forms of mandatory character – examples include Sunday or holiday Holy Mass, prayer and religious meetings. It should be noted that the characteristic element of the faith of the Polish society is associated with the stable and relatively strong attachment to religious practices, such as worship, the Holy Mass or religious meetings, which is much stronger than in other societies.

The CBOS research shows that over half of the respondents (54.0%) take part in religious practices at least once a week, with one in twenty (5.0%) doing it several times a week. Less than one in five Polish adults (18.0%) practice an average of once or twice a month, and almost as many (19.0%) participate in religious services several times a year. Every eleventh respondent (9.0%) did not practice (Boguszewski 2009a).

The IMAS International research shows that almost half of the respondents (50.0%) define themselves as rarely/irregularly practicing, 38.0% practiced regularly, while 11.0% claim to be not practicing. Closer analysis of the group of “regular practitioners” also shows a large variation in the basic socio-demographic categories awarded on the basis of gender, age, place of residence and education (IMAS 2009).

The CBOS surveys show that the level of involvement of Poles, as well as declarations of faith, in the last twenty years, despite periodic fluctuations, has changed little. About half of respondents admit that they practice at least once a week, less than a fifth – once or twice a month, on average, every fifth respondent declares that they participate in religious ceremonies several times a year, and about one in ten admits that they do not take part in them (Boguszewski 2009b). On this basis, one cannot conclude that the religiousness of Poles and their commitment to the Church do not change in any way. Data systematically collected by the Institute of Statistics of the Catholic Church on the religious activity of Catholics are worth being analysed. The key parameters that characterize the specificity of religious commitment are *dominantes* and *communicantes* indicators. The first is the percentage of the faithful present (on the day of the research) at Sunday Mass, in relation to the total number of people obliged to attend. It is assumed that the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday is represented by 82.0% of the faithful. The remaining 18.0% (non-obliged) are children under

the age of seven, the sick and elderly people with limited mobility. The second is the percentage of believers participating (on the day of the research) during the Sunday Mass in Holy Communion, in relation to the total number of the faithful obliged to partake.

Despite methodological shortcomings, such as the impact of weather on attendance of the faithful, and the phenomenon of participation in the mass in a parish to which they do not belong, the analysis of these indicators gives some insight into the specificity of religious commitment of Catholics.

According to ISKK research, over the last few decades we have noted three periods of change. In the 1980s the average rate for the Polish *dominicanos* was 50.0% or more (in 1987 amounted to 55.3%). After 1990, the number of participants in the Sunday Masses did not exceed half of the obliged, remaining at an average of 43.0%–47.0%. The year 2008 was another bordering moment – the average of *dominicanos* dropped to 40.4%. The year 2009 saw an increase of 1.1%, but in 2010 there was a further 0.5% decline in the faithful (ISKK 2010). It seems, therefore, that there are grounds for predicting further decline in the number of the faithful participating in obligatory religious practices in the coming years. This is a trend that has long been revealed in the countries of Western Europe. It seems that the phenomenon of religious fields that are common in more developed societies have become increasingly clear in Poland. It is certainly associated with the social changes taking place in many areas of society.

A little deeper analysis of the data collected by the Institute of Statistics of the Catholic Church points to an interesting phenomenon. Namely, despite the absence of the majority of Catholics from the Sunday Mass, one can notice a gradual increase in the indicators of *communicantes*.

On the national level these indicators were presented: in 1980–1990: 7.8%–10.7%; 1981–2007: 10.8%–17.6%; 2008–2009: 15.3%–16.7% and 16.4% in 2010 (ISKK 2010). These discrepancies can be explained in several ways. According to Witold Zdaniewicz, the ratio of Polish Catholics to the sacrament of penance and reconciliation has a fundamental meaning in this issue. The whole range of different indicators of religious adherence rates to the sacrament of penance remains the same. More than 80.0% of Poles have for many years been going to confession at least once a year. Priests explain this issue slightly different. According to some it may be to some extent a result of lower moral criteria when even long after the confession of the faithful believe that they can partake in the Holy Communion. This may mean too much “taming” of the sacrament of Holy Communion and, to some extent, how people disregard it. Other clerics emphasize, however, that there is a change in the quality of the faith of Poles. In their view, contemporary Catholicism is not ignorant, superficial, conventional, or unreflective. The faithful are increasingly seeking spiritual directions and generally join the confession (Cf. Molenda 2010).

An interesting addition to the presented results may be the distributions of answers to several custom questions posed to respondents in 2008 during the earlier described studies conducted by IMAS International. Respondents were asked to evaluate statements about faith and religion, the relationship between clergy and laity, and evaluation of the institution of the Church. One of the key statements presented was: "The strength of Polish faith is its traditional character." It therefore concerned the generally understood perception of the foundation, on which religious faith is built. The vast majority of respondents (70.0%) agreed with this proposition. Only 9.0% disagreed with this statement and 20.0% were unable to clearly define their position (source: IMAS 2010). We are therefore faced with a very high assessment of the relationship between tradition and faith. One can even put forward the thesis that faith is seen as an important component of the national Polish tradition. The next statement to evaluate was "The Catholic Church is important in the lives of Poles." This obtained nearly identical sets of answers. It can be concluded that the Catholic Church is an institution which is firmly inscribed in Polish socio-cultural landscape. In-depth analysis, however, shows a lack of consistency in the statements of the respondents. Of the respondents only 44.0% said that "the Church should speak out on social issues" (27.0% referred to this question negatively, and 29.0% were unable to clearly define their position), and 36.0% stated that "There is a climate of trust between the laity and the clergy" (41.0% were unable to refer to this issue, and only 22.0% responded positively). Thus, on the one hand, the role and the importance of the Church in Polish society are very highly valued. It is one of the most important institutions, which, however, is denied full participation in society. In addition, there is a clear division within the church.

In light of the above, it is possible to formulate a few main theses regarding the issues of this article. In the reality of Polish society there is a high stability of religious attitudes. The attitude of Polish Catholics toward religion is largely determined by the church institutions, and respect for the patterns of religiousness institutionally promoted as a common phenomenon. We are therefore faced with the situation that encourage the adoption of a position assuming that, despite some transformation in the religious field in Poland during the early 21st century, there is a church religiousness, which is a religiousness strongly institutionally conditioned rather than spirituality, or other new forms referring to religion.

It is, however, worth deepening the analysis and attempt to go beyond the generally accepted indicators of religiousness. There are some interesting conclusions to be drawn from the analysis of responses to the questions asked in the study of CBOS, where respondents had to describe their own situation relating to faith and the recommendations put forward by the Church. Although, the category of people who declare themselves as believers and shall apply to directions given by the Church, are dominating, it clearly reveals a gradual decrease

in the number of Poles defining their religious attitudes (in 2000, it was 56.7% of the total, while in 2009, 53.2%). It is worth noting a noticeable increase in the number of this category in 2005 due to the death of Pope John Paul II (65.9%). This event has changed the number of indicators of religiousness – related both to institutional and non-institutional manifestations. Since 2006, however, there has been a clear decline in the declarations attesting to the involvement of religion in the form recognized as valid by the Catholic Church.

Confirmation of the hypothesis about the changing model of religiousness can be found in the analysis of the respondents' declarations in reference to the evaluated statements. In 2000, 39.6% of respondents claimed that they are believers "in their own way," while in 2009 this number increased to 41.1%. The categories of people describing themselves as non-believers and not interested in the affairs of the Church are increasing (from 0.7% in 2000 to 2.0% in 2009), and the same is true for those claiming to be non-believers, because the church's teachings are wrong (from 0.5% in 2000 to 1.1% in 2009) (Boguszewski 2009b).

There is, therefore, a situation of changing of attitudes towards religion. One could venture to say that there is a gradual exit from orbit interaction with churches by the faithful (especially the Catholic Church). The most obvious consequence of this situation is the increase in the number of people indifferent to religion, but this is not the only direction of change. The already mentioned phenomenon does not necessarily mean the loss of faith. Religious involvement may in fact appear in other forms and other patterns.

It needs to be noted, however, that although we are dealing with transformations, they are evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Changes recorded in the surveys are based on a maximum number of rate shifts between categories over the decade. There is no doubt that the transformation is taking place, and its direction is quite clear – we are dealing with the transition from attachment to religious institutions to forms of religious life based on authentic spiritual experience and a desire to deepen one's own religious knowledge. Therefore there is a slow transition from ritualism to the genuine commitment to religious life, which is carried out in non-institutional forms.

Again, one could refer to the earlier thesis that there is a transformation in the Catholic Church in Poland, which can be described as a transition "from quantity to quality." This means that although the number of the faithful of the institution is falling, it is those seriously involved who are genuinely religious, and for whom the cultivation of religion is one of the major imperatives in life, and its implementation is done in a conscious way, under the aegis of the Church.

The summarized results of the survey should certainly be reflected based on other considerations. Józef Styk deemed it appropriate to ask the question about whether on the basis of the survey there is now only a one form of religiousness or more forms of religiousness to analyse? Far-reaching processes of individualization mean that we now have to deal with attitudes of anti-institutionalism,

which are based on the challenging role of the Church and the official interpretation of the faith. They are not manifestations of the lack of religiousness, but the determinants of new forms (Styk 1996: 190).

The current records of churches and other religious organizations are held by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration and have currently a total of 180 subjects. In addition, the ministerial list of churches and religious associations contain 15 subjects which operate under separate laws (source: Internal Affairs data). But it should be remembered that in addition to the registered churches and religious organizations, there are many unofficially active religious communities of various natures operating in Poland – from affiliates of churches with a high degree of autonomy to unregistered new religious movements (commonly referred to as “cults”).

This gives a picture of a fairly varied religious market, where anyone interested can find a proposal that meets their expectations. A number of operating subjects gives one the opportunity to fulfill many diverse religious needs – from fundamentalist communities that require the full commitment of the members’ lives, to the cult movements of syncretic nature.

Once again, one can relate to the picture rendered by Szlendak, i.e. “religious supermarket.” The wealth of forms and opportunities to participate in the religious life is closely connected with the utilitarian, consumerist treatment of religion. The sociology of religion talks about increasingly common forms of selective, subjective, inconsistent religiousness. These forms are based on choosing from the available doctrines in order to fit the lifestyles, realized values and respected norms. The selective attitude characteristic of the customer is becoming more and more common – one can choose from religion only what meets one’s needs. One does not need to absorb the overall “package”, including those elements which are undesired by a purchaser. This does not mean the rejection of religion, but it is a form of seeking holiness in the realities of the cultural supermarket (Szlendak 2008: 104–105).

Surveys carried out on nationwide samples, quite briefly summarizing issues related to religious life do not give rise to a categorical formulation about fundamental changes in religiousness among Poles.

A little deeper analysis, taking into account other sources, can predict a certain trends and direction of the transformations. Despite the fact that since the early 1990s, declarations of faith have been slightly volatile, relationships to religious practices have changed quite significantly. There has been a significant drop in the number of people practicing regularly, and those who only occasionally participate in worship services, masses or religious meetings are increasing. It seems, therefore, that we have to deal with returning to a growing number of the faithful in the direction of less institutionalized, individualized religiousness, which is based not so much on the participation in the communal practice, but the truly profound spiritual experience. One could even risk saying that



we are dealing with change of reducing the number of active followers while at the same time intensifying religious commitment of those who remain in the community of the faithful. Tradition plays a less important role in terms of affiliation with the community and in determining the nature of religiousness. Increasingly, the forms of religious life are conditioned by individual decisions related to meeting the spiritual needs. The observed gradual transformation can be defined as the transition from a religion of tradition to a religion of choice, or in the context of the Community as a transition from the Church of tradition to the Church of choice.

It seems that we are dealing with abrasive currents, as it is possible to observe a gradual decline in the number of the faithful participating in the celebrations. At the same time, however, one can see a growing commitment to spiritual and cognitive aspects of religion. An important aspect of the change also appears to be a widening of the range of options to meet the religious needs, outside established religious institutions with well-established traditions. Currently, the wealth of non-institutional forms of activity is continuing to expand, and its growth seems to be unlimited.

In an attempt to address the question posed in the title of this article, it may be stated that in the reality of contemporary Poland, the traditional religious practices, which can be referred to as church religiousness, is still dominating. It should be noted, however, that new forms of religious activities are more and more emphasised. While there has not been a radical transformation of religious attitudes, there has been a strong shift towards spirituality, which seem to be the real scenario of changes.

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## Summary

Social development leads to increased autonomy of the individual areas of social life. Each of them becomes a kind of individuality, specificity and independence of the others in their respective functions. This situation is also reflected in the sphere of religious life. In contemporary societies there is a lack of unambiguous compliance to religious and social norms as the religious monopoly to a particular religious confession was broken. Religion in a pluralistic society is changing in its function. One of the key approaches describing the transformations associated with the sphere of religious experiences are the theories of secularization. Currently, secularism is no longer understood as simply the disappearance of religion, and more often the specific changes that occur in the sacrum.

It may be stated that in the reality of contemporary Poland, the traditional religious practices, which can be referred to as church religiousness, is still dominative. It should be noted, however, that new forms of religious activities are more and more highlighted. While there has not been a radical transformation of religious attitudes, there has been a strong shift towards spirituality.